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**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims to read as follows:

1. **(Cancelled).**
2. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the touch dry primer coating is sprayed with the film strengthening solution.
3. **(Cancelled).**
4. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the binder comprises an aqueous solution stabilized by a silicate substituted by at least one anionic group of lower pKa than silicic acid, having a pH of 7 to 10.5 prepared by lowering the pH of a solution of silicate and silicate by ion exchange.
5. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the primer coating further comprises zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy.
6. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the primer coating further comprises an organic resin.
7. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein all components of the coating composition are added and thoroughly mixed shortly before application.
8. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the touch dry primer coating is treated with a solution of a silicate or alkoxysilane.

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9. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the solution is applied to the touch dry primer coated steel at 0.005-0.2 liters per square meter primer coated surface.

10. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the touch dry primer coating is treated with an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt of concentration at least 0.01M.

11. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the primer coating of the steel, drying of the primer coating until it is touch dry and application of the treatment solution are carried out successively in an on-line process.

12. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the primer coating is dried at a temperature of 10 - 60°C in a forced air flow.

13. **(Currently amended)** A method of treating steel primer comprising: spraying an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt of concentration at least 0.01M on steel that has previously been coated with a primer coating ~~composition~~ comprising an aqueous silica sol binder having a particle size in the range 3 to 100nm and a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1.

14. **(Currently amended)** A method of treating steel primer comprising: spraying a silicate, an alkoxysilane or an acyloxysilane solution on steel that has previously been coated with a primer coating ~~composition~~ comprising an aqueous silica sol binder having a particle size in the range 3 to 100nm and a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1.

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15. **(Previously presented)** A process according to claim 21 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

16. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 13 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

17. **(Previously presented)** A method according to claim 14 wherein the binder further comprises an alkali metal silicate.

18. **(Previously presented)** A process for primer coating of steel comprising: coating the steel with a primer coating comprising a silica binder and zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol having a particle size in the range 3 to 100 nm and having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1; and after the primer coating has dried to the extent that it is touch dry, treating it with a film strengthening solution.

19. **(Previously presented)** A process for primer coating of steel comprising: coating the steel with a primer coating comprising a silica binder and zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol having a particle size in the range 3 to 100 nm and having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1; and spraying an aqueous solution of an inorganic salt having a concentration of at least 0.01M on the steel coated with the primer coating.

20. **(Previously presented)** A process for primer coating of steel comprising: coating the steel with a primer coating comprising a silica binder and zinc powder and/or a zinc alloy, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol having a particle size in the range 3 to 100 nm and having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1; and spraying a silicate or alkoxysilane solution on the steel coated with the primer coating.

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21. **(Previously presented)** A process for primer coating of steel comprising:  
coating the steel with a primer coating comprising a silica binder, wherein the binder comprises an aqueous silica sol having a particle size in the range 3 to 100 nm and having a  $\text{SiO}_2/\text{M}_2\text{O}$  mole ratio, where M represents total alkali metal and ammonium ions, of at least 25:1; and  
after the primer coating has dried to the extent that it is touch dry, treating it with a film strengthening solution.